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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 002661

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TAGS: PGOV KCRM KJUS ES  
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SACA ESTABLISHES ANTI-CRIME COMMISSION

REF: A. SAN SALVADOR 2526

1B. SAN SALVADOR 2204  
1C. SAN SALVADOR 1702

Classified By: Charge Michael Butler. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) In the wake of the Ambassador's October 16 speech calling for immediate action to stop crime, followed by pressure from leading members of the business community and ex-President Calderon Sol, the Saca administration has inaugurated a new Anti-Crime Commission, which will make recommendations to the Administration on how to address the crime problem in the short, medium, and long term. (Note: Saca's only comment on the Ambassador's speech was to thank him for the advice, but he quickly added that the continued deportation of violent criminals from the U.S. exacerbated the problem. End note.) The Commission is composed of 14 members from the private sector, academia, clergy, and all parties of the Legislative Assembly, and includes some of those who have recently leveled the harshest criticism toward the Saca Administration.

¶12. (C) The members of the committee from academia include Jose Maria Tojeira, the Jesuit rector of the University of Central America; David Escobar Galindo, the nation's most respected intellectual and poet; Mauricio Rodriguez Loucel, head of the private Technological University, and Cesar Calderon, rector of the private Alberto Masferrer University. From the private sector the President chose two of the most outspoken recent critics on the crime issue, Federico Colorado, President of the National Private Enterprise Association and Elena de Alfaro, President of the Chamber of Commerce. Alfaro had earlier threatened that business owners would cause a general shutdown of operations if the administration did not take concrete action within two weeks to lower crime levels, though her appointment to the Commission seems to have softened that threat. Also from the private sector, the Commission includes Juan Daniel Aleman, adviser for the FUSADES "think-tank" NGO, which hosted the Ambassador's speech. From the Legislative Assembly the Commission includes Guillermo Gallegos of ARENA, an Assembly caucus leader, and representatives from the PCN (National Reconciliation), PDC (Christian Democrats), CD (Democratic Change), and FMLN political parties.

¶13. (C) COMMENT: Many sectors of society have offered commentary on the Ambassador's October 16 call for Salvadorans to take ownership and act on violent crime; most are enthusiastic about the Ambassador's message and eager for early action. The added pressure from the private sector and ex-President Calderon Sol offered new impetus for the Administration to take action. However, while the private sector's input was helpful insofar as it also called for immediate action, the business leaders' immediate public refusal to accept any new taxes to help fight crime was very unhelpful. The President's new Commission takes an inclusive

approach, integrating various sectors of society with different viewpoints, but one inside observer whose information is usually reliable reported that the creation of the Commission was little more than an effort to defuse Embassy criticism at the Administration's lack of action. The diversity of the group ensures that the Administration will receive candid advice, if the Commission's members manage to agree on anything, but it also ensures the process of taking action to stop crime will be delayed.

Butler